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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 7th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 23 April 1991, at 3 p.m.

Chairman:	Ms. PALME	(Sweden)
later:	Ms. SETH (Vice-Chairman)	(India)
later:	Ms. PALME (Chairman)	(Sweden)

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General debate (continued)

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Any corrections to the records of the meetings of this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. SEMUKHA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that 11 December 1991 would mark the forty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 57 (I) establishing the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. The achievements of UNICEF since that time had been crowned by the 1990 World Summit for Children, which had significantly enhanced the authority of UNICEF in international affairs. At the Summit, the Heads of State of more than 70 countries, including his own, had demonstrated political support for the programme goals of UNICEF for the 1990s and had decided to implement a concrete Plan of Action to address the needs of children as a matter of priority. Another major event in 1990 had been the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the Byelorussian SSR had been one of the first countries to ratify.

2. The role of UNICEF was to cooperate with Governments, non-governmental organizations and other international agencies to define the needs of children and to support individual countries in planning and implementing appropriate measures to address those needs. Its activities should defend the interests of all children, in accordance with the principle of universality proclaimed in the Convention.

3. It was particularly important that the commitment to enhancing the physical and spiritual well-being of children, as set forth in the Declaration, should be viewed as the common task of all peoples. That provision of the Declaration was a message of hope and universal solidarity that took on special significance for the children and mothers who had suffered from the effects of the Chernobyl nuclear accident. The growth of international solidarity in support of those victims had culminated in the sponsorship by more than 120 Member States of General Assembly resolution 45/190 on international cooperation to address and mitigate the consequences of the accident. In addition, the interim report of the Secretary-General on the matter had indicated that the situation required concerted action by the entire international community.

4. In 1990, the Supreme Soviet of the Byelorussian SSR had declared the territory of the Republic a national ecological disaster area. The scale and consequences of the disaster were becoming clearer as the years passed. Physicians and scientists had reaffirmed the continuing danger posed by radioactive contamination. Studies had shown that half of all children from the contaminated zone who had been examined were ill, with changes in their immune system, blood or thyroid gland. Levels of radioactive caesium in children were 2 to 10 times permissible levels, and the milk of nursing mothers had been found to contain caesium. There was also an increased incidence of anaemia, leukaemia and malignant tumours. In Byelorussia alone, the health and lives of 800,000 children were at risk, and UNICEF could not

(Mr. Semukha, Byelorussian SSR)

afford to ignore them. Emergency assistance was needed in the form of medical examinations, treatment and relocation outside the contaminated zone. His delegation would present a draft resolution to that effect to the Programme Committee, and he hoped for the continued understanding, sympathy and support of the Executive Board.

5. Mr. VACEK (Czechoslovakia) said that in the past year and a half, there had been a marked increase in child-related activities in Czechoslovakia. Those activities included high-level discussions at Prague with the UNICEF Deputy Executive Director, active participation in the World Conference on Education for All and in the World Summit for Children, various workshops and conferences in Czechoslovakia and neighbouring countries and the first visit by the UNICEF Executive Director to Czechoslovakia, which had significantly improved the country's relations with UNICEF. In addition, Parliament had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had approved considerable aid for children in the region of the Chernobyl accident. The transformation of the country's National Committee for UNICEF into an independent organization was nearly complete.

6. Because of the problems caused by Czechoslovakia's transition to a market economy, its Government had been unable to increase its contribution to UNICEF. Moreover, the difficulties of the transition period placed children at risk of suffering from the adverse social and psychological effects of economic hardship. The Government was therefore preparing a law on assistance to families with children and had decided to establish a social emergency network. Further action would be needed in the years to come, however, and he hoped that Czechoslovakia's National Committee for UNICEF would play a major role in protecting the rights of children.

7. In accordance with article 34 of the Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit, intensive negotiations were under way in Czechoslovakia for the establishment of a working group in charge of creating a mechanism to implement the Plan. Czechoslovakia had also acted on its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child by preparing for an international conference on child abuse and neglect, to be held at Prague in June 1991. It supported the proposal that the Executive Board should, at its current session, decide to launch an appeal for speedy ratification of the Convention by those countries which had not yet done so.

8. He welcomed the establishment of two Programme Officer posts for Central and Eastern European affairs. The Officers should begin their work by familiarizing themselves at first hand with the real situation in the region and with the particular problems and needs of each individual country. UNICEF policy in the region should focus inter alia on "adjustment with a human face", children and the environment, assistance in creating community-based financing and preventive measures against the involvement of children in drug trafficking. He was also pleased to note the increased attention being given to education for development, including the creation of two Education for

(Mr. Vacek, Czechoslovakia)

Development Officer posts. He recommended that the Executive Director submit the UNICEF document on education for development policy to the Executive Board in 1992. The document on external relations (E/ICEF/1991/L.4) fully satisfied the requirements of decision 1990/14, and he believed that a separate document on external relations would no longer be necessary within a few years. He welcomed the country approach as a new trend in UNICEF activities in industrialized countries, although details were required on when and under which plan the new approach would be applied in practice.

9. Increased cooperation between UNICEF and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) had resulted in an important publication on children and the environment and in UNICEF participation in preparations for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Since the role of UNICEF in solving the steadily worsening problems of the environment was extraordinarily important, he recommended the establishment of a UNICEF/UNEP Joint Committee on Environmental Policy, along the lines of the existing Joint Committees with WHO and UNESCO. With respect to budgetary and financial matters, he strongly favoured the adoption of documents E/ICEF/AB/L.1 and L.9 in their current form. However, with respect to recruitment, the Executive Director's report did not reflect the non-representation of many countries on UNICEF's staff. The UNICEF secretariat should take that reality into consideration when organizing recruitment missions.

10. Mr. VAN SCHAIK (Netherlands) said that the importance of the World Summit for Children, the World Conference on Education for All and the Convention on the Rights of the Child lay primarily in the translation of goals, objectives and commitments agreed to at the global level into action at the national and local levels. His Government was in the process of making certain adjustments to its policies and procedures in the light of the results of the World Summit. In response to the Plan of Action adopted at the Summit and the recommendations in the Executive Director's report, the Netherlands planned to continue to give high priority to the health sector and particularly to primary health care, with emphasis on the poorer population groups in both urban and rural environments and on popular participation. It also intended to increase its support for education in all forms and at all levels in developing countries. His Government had pledged to increase its level of assistance to Africa by approximately 50 per cent over the coming decade.

11. He agreed that there was a need to restructure development assistance budgets to give higher priority to the social sector and basic services. UNICEF country programmes should set a standard in that regard, since national administrations required the expertise and experience of UNICEF in assessing the impact of development activities on women and children. In the field of debt reduction, his delegation was prepared to continue and develop activities in cooperation with UNICEF, perhaps along the lines of the UNICEF/Inter-American Development Bank initiative concerning "debt for development" swaps.

(Mr. Van Schaik, Netherlands)

12. Further clarification and discussion were required concerning the proposed orientation and possible consequences of programmes for children as the conscience of a movement. The implied shift in focus from development issues to advocacy and social mobilization issues should not be allowed to undermine regular programme implementation. He also looked forward to discussions on improved coordination of responses to emergencies on the part of UNICEF, as well as on the budget and the proposal for new office accommodation.

13. He was pleased that the 1990 Summit had prompted an increase in contributions to UNICEF. His Government's core contribution to UNICEF would continue to grow steadily in the future, and public contributions to the Netherlands National Committee were likely to grow as well. In fact, those contributions had exceeded the Government's contribution to UNICEF in 1990, and the Netherlands National Committee ranked second in absolute terms as a contributor to UNICEF. He trusted that the increase in contributions would be matched by increased efforts on the part of UNICEF to pursue a sound budgetary policy.

14. Mr. YAHYA (Indonesia) said that in the late 1980s, the end of the ideological competition between East and West had engendered a new optimism about the international community's capacity to collectively and meaningfully address issues of international peace, security and socio-economic development. That attitude, together with the renewed faith in the United Nations, offered new prospects for the survival, protection and development of children. The previous year's activities to enhance public awareness of children's issues had raised hopes that child welfare and development would finally receive due attention at the highest levels of government, that such issues would be addressed within broader development strategies and that children, particularly those in the developing countries, would eventually benefit from a peace dividend.

15. It was evident, however, that the fulfilment of such hopes remained a remote possibility in many parts of the world. The goal of a more open and equitable international trading system had yet to be achieved, while the persistent debt burden and the adverse effects of a rapidly fluctuating international economy and lower commodity prices had significantly undermined the capacity of many developing countries to implement social or economic development activities. Some regions had even experienced a decline in their development capabilities.

16. Globally, however, progress had been made. Standards for the treatment of children had been firmly established by the adoption and speedy entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which all States should ratify and implement. Of the UNICEF activities detailed in the report on the implementation of the Convention (E/ICEF/1991/L.7), his delegation particularly welcomed the development of national mechanisms for gathering gender-specific data on children, which it hoped would help develop child

(Mr. Yahya, Indonesia)

welfare programme policy; the preparation of revised guidelines for country situation analyses incorporating the standards set by the Convention; and the training of Government and UNICEF staff, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations to ensure that their programmes had a positive influence on progress towards full implementation.

17. The World Summit for Children likewise signalled a new international commitment to child survival, protection and development and gave hope that there was both the will and the ability to address those issues. It was now imperative for UNICEF to maintain a sense of interest in follow-up to the World Summit. It should investigate what new action had been taken by international organizations other than UNICEF in support of the Summit goals, whether such organizations were being given additional funding and other assistance to meet those goals, and whether bilateral aid programmes had been reordered in support of those goals.

18. The recent achievement of 80 per cent immunization levels world wide was another step forward. The attainment of that goal had saved the lives of millions of children and secured the healthy development of millions more, making it realistic to aim at the eradication of polio and neonatal tetanus in the coming decade. In addition to the development of new potent vaccines, community awareness and participation in cost recovery were important elements in the sustainability of universal child immunization (UCI).

19. As a follow-up to the World Summit, Indonesia had reviewed the targets of several child welfare activities. Its fifth five-year development plan addressed children's issues and its UNICEF country programme was consistent with Summit goals. Given the need for consistency between the government planning process and UNICEF country programmes and overall strategy, Indonesia suggested that UNICEF should include in the State of the World's Children 1992 report a country-by-country breakdown of the numbers of children and mothers who would be saved yearly if the country's commitments were fulfilled. The national programmes of action to be prepared before the end of 1991 in response to the Summit Plan of Action should be incorporated into national development plans and should contain an assessment of past performance, trends and policy-based projections.

20. Turning to the medium-term plan for 1991-1994 contained in document E/ICEF/1991/3, his delegation suggested that the 7 per cent of total income currently earmarked for emergencies from supplementary funding should be increased to 10 per cent if additional supplementary funds became available.

21. Mrs. KANG Ling (China) expressed appreciation for UNICEF's success in the past year in improving the conditions for child survival, development and education and in promoting the integration of women in development. The year 1990 had been an historic year for children: the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children were the two most important documents ever adopted on behalf of children, brightening their prospects and

(Mrs. Kang Ling, China)

filling their advocates with confidence. The year had also seen the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which China was in the process of ratifying, and the realization of the goal of 80 per cent immunization coverage for children in the developing world. That extraordinary accomplishment had saved over 12 million young lives and prevented the crippling of over one and a half million children. It would have a major impact on reducing mortality rates and improving development prospects. China fully endorsed the goals and strategies for children in the 1990s adopted by the Executive Board, and supported UNICEF's efforts to consolidate the gains in immunization coverage by extending it to the remaining 20 per cent of children in the poorest and hardest to reach groups.

22. Many disturbing problems still affected children, however: the mortality rate in the developing world stood at 14 million children each year, while chronic malnutrition affected one child in every three and only 55 per cent of children completed four years of primary education. Of the 900 million illiterate or semi-illiterate adults in the world, two thirds were women. One third to one half of rural families lacked clean water and safe sanitation. Even more disturbing was the fact that the debt burden of developing countries had not been alleviated, thereby preventing them from improving those conditions. China believed that such a situation was no longer tolerable, and it would work for the establishment of a new world political and economic order.

23. 1990 had also been an impressive year for child development in China. After five years of hard work, it had achieved the goal of 85 per cent immunization coverage at provincial levels by 1988 and at county levels by 1990. Over the past 40 years, the Government had made remarkable improvements in child health, nutrition, education and welfare and in maternal and child health care. A 1986 law on compulsory education gave every school-age child the right to education, and over 74.6 per cent of children completed primary education. Seventeen Chinese provinces had issued regulations for the protection of children, and a national law on the protection of minors was under review. In 1990, a National Coordinating Committee for Women and Children had been set up to coordinate the work of 19 government departments, agencies and organizations, the current goal being the formulation of child development plans. China had also made progress in reducing school drop-out rates for girls in nine provinces, although girls still made up 83 per cent of children without schooling. China was also providing family and social education to nearly 100 million people, alongside formal education.

24. Among China's remaining problems, however, were certain areas of maternal and child health care. In a country with such a large population, vast territory, huge geographical differences and uneven economic development, it was an arduous task to achieve the goals set by the World Summit and the World Conference on Education for All, but China would attempt to do so by setting practical and specific objectives.

25. Mr. THOMPSON (Barbados) said that, since ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, his Government had been trying to ensure its widest possible acceptance among the general public through coordinated efforts with community groups and the media. Preparations were also well advanced on a national plan of action embodying a multisectoral approach to achieving the goals of the World Summit for Children. Recognizing that education and community participation were pivotal to the achievement of those goals, the Barbados Child Care Board had been highlighting the role of parents as major caregivers, and assistance was being provided to parents at the community level by Government agencies and non-governmental organizations. The Child Care Board had also introduced a number of programmes to deal with one major problem, the integration of disabled children into the mainstream. Under the newly established Foster Care Association, a lively foster care programme existed for other children in especially difficult circumstances, and the hope was to move away entirely from institutionalization.

26. Some issues which Barbados felt needed urgent attention were the discriminatory treatment of the mentally ill and the acute need for health and education programmes to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS and protect vulnerable groups, especially young girls and women of child-bearing age. Barbados had established a National Advisory Committee on AIDS, which was working through the media and other channels to encourage changes in attitudes and lifestyles.

27. Barbados gave foremost priority to the girl child and had been addressing such critical aspects of the role and status of women as the education of girls and women and their health and legal status. It was emphasizing programmes to combat the high incidence of teenage pregnancy, and instruction was being provided on the practices of safe motherhood and family planning.

28. Barbados, along with other Caribbean countries, was supporting the goal of universal child immunization (UCI). Polio had been completely eradicated and there was a country-wide measles immunization programme aimed at all children between the ages of 1 and 15 in all schools. Immunization against diphtheria, polio and tetanus was already compulsory, prior to entering school.

29. Barbados was fully committed to ensuring the full participation of women in all spheres of national life, particularly at the decision-making level, while fully recognizing women's multiple roles, particularly as heads of household since some 43 per cent of Barbadian families were headed by women. A National Advisory Council on Women had been set up recently to review the status of women and define a national policy statement. The Council would also examine existing legislation and recommend areas for change, and would take a participatory approach by bringing together resource persons from public and private agencies and meeting with women by sectors. It was the Government's intention to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Summit Declaration and Plan of Action in conjunction with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Moreover, the Advisory Council on Women would seek to involve men wherever possible in child survival, protection and development activities, and to

(Mr. Thompson, Barbados)

ensure informed and sensitive reporting on women's and children's issues in the media.

30. The recently concluded strategy meeting organized by the UNICEF Caribbean Area Office had been particularly successful. Barbados was determined to maintain the momentum of the historic World Summit for Children.

31. Ms. Seth (India), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

32. Mr. HOSSAIN (Bangladesh) observed that for UNICEF and for the children of the world, the 1990s had seen a wonderful beginning with the World Summit for Children, the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Conference on Education for All, as well as the dramatic achievements in universal child immunization. UNICEF must translate the promise of those historic events into reality, and Bangladesh would help in every way possible. The lesson of the 1980s was that hunger, poverty, malnutrition and a threatened environment could prove disastrous to children, particularly in the least developed countries, and UNICEF goals for the 1990s must accord priority to the needs of those countries.

33. The welfare of children in the developing nations could not be viewed in isolation from the economic stagnation and hardship in those countries. Sustainable development was a necessity, and its achievement required cooperation between the countries concerned and their development partners, including international organizations and indigenous non-governmental organizations. The World Summit for Children had in its Declaration clearly highlighted the importance of debt-relief initiatives for achieving the goals for children in the 1990s, and UNICEF's call in the early 1980s for "adjustment with a human face" had been a widely appreciated step in that direction. Bangladesh encouraged UNICEF to explore voluntary debt-reduction schemes that might be used to support additional efforts in developing countries to promote child survival, protection and development.

34. The implementation of the World Summit Plan of Action, which was of paramount importance if the pledges made to children were to be fulfilled, would require community, national and international commitment to the cause of children and would have to be combined with the revitalization of economic growth in the developing countries, poverty reduction, human resources development and environmental protection. It was only natural that UNICEF should play an active and constructive role in the follow-up to the Plan of Action. The strategy and social mobilization used to achieve the breakthrough in UCI, and the high-level political support and multisectoral international cooperation generated, should be expanded and directed towards the goal of child survival, protection and development in the 1990s.

35. Budget allocations for staffing were very closely related to the implementation of the goals for the 1990s. Field offices would require strong advisory and support services from headquarters to meet their challenges effectively, but the priority of strengthening field offices must be respected.

(Mr. Hossain, Bangladesh)

36. The close cooperation between his Government and UNICEF had been manifested by the formation of a joint Government-UNICEF advisory group. Bangladesh had committed itself to universal child immunization. Its expanded programme on immunization (EPI) had expanded from eight sub-districts in 1986 to all 460 sub-districts by the end of 1989. Extensive advocacy and social mobilization had raised UCI coverage to more than 60 per cent by 1990.

37. In the education sector, attention must be focused on developing low-cost, community and home-based activities as well as non-formal channels to complement the formal primary school system. Bangladesh had enacted laws providing free and compulsory primary education with effect from 1991. As part of a broad strategy to improve the status and role of women in society, it had decided to recruit only female primary schoolteachers.

38. A small working group would be formed in each relevant ministry in order to formulate a national action plan for implementing the Summit Plan of Action. His Government would join other countries of the region in an annual review of the implementation of the Summit Declaration.

39. Mr. OSATANANDA (Thailand) said that UNICEF's role in stimulating the debate on development policy issues had received wide recognition, as was demonstrated by increased financial contributions to the Fund. His delegation endorsed the Executive Director's recommendation that the medium-term plan contained in document E/ICEF/1991/3 should be approved as a framework for projections for 1991-1994. It also supported the preparation of up to $500 million in programme expenditures from general resources.

40. The progress achieved in universal child immunization was heartening. His delegation also encouraged UNICEF to continue its leadership role in identifying and implementing measures to provide debt relief in order to ease the burden of debt on children.

41. His delegation commended UNICEF efforts to strengthen the role of women in development, including the continued support given to the formulation of the necessary national policies. The survival and development of girl children was a universal problem, found to varying degrees in most regions of the world. Studies similar to the evaluation report on sex differentials in child survival and development in the Middle East and North Africa should be conducted in all regions in order to develop appropriate programmes.

42. He drew attention to the concept of family development, with special emphasis on the role and responsibility of men in the family and analysis of their role in child survival, protection and development and women's development. That topic had received very little attention in most ongoing and new country programmes. The family was a primary social institution which still provided the best and most affordable informal security system for children and other dependants in most developing countries. Unfortunately, modernization and changing social values had considerably weakened the

(Mr. Osatananda, Thailand)

traditional family, with detrimental consequences for women and girl children, both as the providers and the dependants of the family. It was high time that action was taken to promote equal sharing of family responsibilities by male and female members. In Thailand, protection of children's and women's rights and promotion of the family had received high priority in government policy. The National Committee on the Family was carrying out extensive family development programmes and was involved in preparations for observance of the International Year of the Family in 1994.

43. His delegation was in favour of giving continued attention to children in especially difficult circumstances. The UNICEF response to emergency situations such as natural disasters and armed conflict during the past year also deserved high tribute from the international community. His delegation fully supported integrating AIDS activities into ongoing country programmes and continued close cooperation with the WHO Global Programme on AIDS. It was gratifying to learn that UNICEF was now approaching global problems in a more methodical manner and was emphasizing flexible implementation strategies.

44. Mr. CAT (Uruguay) said that the economic crisis of the 1980s and the external debt burden had led to a reversal of economic gains and a massive increase in extreme poverty in his country. Uruguay's demographics made it almost unique in its region. Its low birth rate and population growth, combined with a high life expectancy, had led to a marked aging of its population. In addition, it had experienced a high rate of urbanization and progressive population loss in rural areas. Despite those demographic factors, however, its economy remained similar to that of a developing country. Because Uruguay's indicators for such elements as per capita income, infant mortality, malnutrition and literacy ranked among the best in the region, it had been difficult to gain recognition for the gravity of its social problems. Prolonged economic stagnation had created pockets of chronic poverty with indicators comparable to the worst in Latin America.

45. The growing social deterioration had undermined the effectiveness of traditional social policies which had been aimed at a population consisting primarily of low-income workers and their families. The new poor fell outside that sector, with the result that massive public spending on social programmes was not reaching the groups in greatest need. Public education, for example, had a high rate of coverage, but lacked the necessary effectiveness. The Government was now faced with the task of redirecting social spending towards priority groups and needs. Because it had also undertaken a rigorous structural adjustment and inflation control programme which affected the most vulnerable sectors disproportionately, it had had to develop a strategy designed to help them achieve self-sufficiency.

46. The Government had established an advisory commission on social investment with United Nations assistance, a social investment programme responsible for creating a population data bank to identify beneficiaries. It had also established a social emergency fund whose goals included the

(Mr. Cat, Uruguay)

protection of children in especially difficult circumstances. The Fund also coordinated the activities of non-governmental organizations and the Government in order to prevent duplication of effort and ensure the most effective use of resources.

47. In addition to solving problems, it was necessary to tackle their root causes. His Government evaluated its policies in terms of social effectiveness, not just economics. Its current action in the social sector involved redefining strategies, restructuring social systems, and redirecting social spending. Such an ambitious undertaking could not succeed without the financial and technical cooperation of the international community.

48. Uruguay had joined Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay in forming the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), which would substantially expand its markets but also require a major competitive effort. His country was ready for the challenge, but would require international cooperation during the transition period. It had also reached an agreement with its international creditors on the restructuring of its external debt which would permit a debt capitalization policy and, in turn, attract new investment.

49. His delegation believed that UNICEF should intensify its efforts to help children in those parts of the world where the need was greatest. It was not in a position to judge whether the proposed staff increases at headquarters or in the field were really appropriate, but believed that any increase in activities as a result of new resources would have to be handled efficiently and effectively.

50. Mr. KARUKUBIRO-KAMUNANWIRE (Uganda) said that his delegation hoped there would be sufficient political will to ensure the implementation of the goals of the World Summit, which called for intensified efforts at all levels and a serious evaluation exercise.

51. The Gulf war had not only caused tremendous immediate suffering to millions of children, but had had a serious impact on the ability of oil-importing developing countries to improve their situation.

52. Though a priority area, Africa had seen little improvement in its circumstances during 1990. Despite encouraging signs, there had been little change in the situation of children living under apartheid. Civil strife had caused great suffering for women and children and had also created fresh waves of refugees, placing a great strain on the socio-economic infrastructure of neighbouring countries. Those countries must be commended for continuing to welcome refugees, despite the burden on their meagre resources. The debt burden and the social impact of stringent structural adjustment measures had a negative effect on the survival and welfare of children. His delegation hoped that the idea of debt relief for children would be translated into specific programmes.

(Mr. Karukubiro-Kamunanwire, Uganda)

53. On the bright side, Africa had demonstrated great commitment to the goals of ensuring child survival and enhancing child welfare. The African Charter on the Rights of the Child had been adopted as a complement to the international Convention. On the whole, tremendous advances had been made in child immunization, and some progress had been made in the implementation of the Bamako Initiative.

54. Regarding Uganda's country programme, while there had been some positive efforts, his delegation was concerned about certain programmes whose outcome was uncertain. Those included a district health management project and a women and community mobilization project, as well as the Health Financing Initiative. The Government attached high priority to those projects and had included them in its 1991-1992 national budget.

55. The AIDS pandemic posed a real threat to Uganda's population, particularly women and children. Unless urgent measures were taken, it would have an adverse impact on all the activities contemplated in the country programme. His Government's policy concerning AIDS had emphasized public education and awareness. However, combating the spread of AIDS would require additional financial resources which had not been provided for in the country programme budget.

56. The three major project reviews carried out in 1990 had demonstrated his Government's efforts to provide support for the country programme. Nevertheless, the inadequate level of funding remained the greatest factor in the failure to implement projects. He urged donor countries and other potential contributors to extend tangible support in order to enable his Government to achieve the objectives outlined in the country programme.

57. With regard to the revised budget estimates for the biennium 1990-1991 and budget estimates for the biennium 1992-1993, he felt that proposals to ensure adequate resources for unfunded or under-funded programmes were conspicuously absent. In the case of Uganda, it had been suggested that resources should be redirected from some programmes that were just as important as others. He did not view that as a solution. His delegation would appreciate further clarification of the revised budget estimates and proposed programme budget, and looked forward in that regard to the discussions in the Committee on Administration and Finance.

58. His delegation stressed the importance of programme delivery, particularly in developing countries, and the need for UNICEF to give priority to programme implementation. He welcomed the Executive Director's proposals to strengthen country offices in developing countries. Efforts should also be made to build up the middle categories in field offices, because of their critical role in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. That would enhance programme delivery, while correcting the imbalance in representation on the UNICEF staff which had hitherto existed between developing and developed countries.

(Mr. Karukubiro-Kamunanwire, Uganda)

59. He also underscored the importance of endogenous capacity-building as an integral part of UNICEF programmes and activities. Experience had shown that many projects were not self-sustaining once UNICEF support was withdrawn, because local project officers did not have the necessary expertise to run them. There was a need to make greater use of local experts and consultants. In that connection, he welcomed the proposal to base the national capacity-building programme in Africa.

60. Every effort should be made to ensure that training, information exchange and the enhancement of management, monitoring and evaluation skills were part of project implementation. UNICEF programmes should encourage the development of local inputs, which would enable countries to save their foreign exchange. Uganda's experience with the iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) programme revealed the need for greater coordination among United Nations agencies at the field level in order to ensure the optimum use of scarce resources.

61. Mr. SULEIMAN (Oman) said that, while the full impact of the Gulf war had yet to be assessed, the loss of remittances from relatives working abroad and their return to face unemployment at home would certainly aggravate the poverty situation of many women and families in the region. Accordingly, UNICEF support to the region should be examined in the light of changing circumstances.

62. Oman fully endorsed the recommendations of the World Summit for Children, which had brought the problems of children to the forefront. He supported the goal of reducing malnutrition by 50 per cent and the integrated approach taken to that issue by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF. Another goal which also deserved high priority was improving hygiene and sanitation. That was an area in which, with proper guidance, individuals could do a great deal to enhance their health and well-being. His country felt that the time was ripe for concerted action and that hygiene and sanitation should be given as much attention in the 1990s as immunization and oral rehydration therapy had received in the 1980s.

63. With regard to the development of improved vaccines, Oman had achieved more than 90 per cent immunization coverage and yet, in 1988, a significant paralytic poliomyelitis outbreak had occurred. With such high coverage, natural immunity was lost, and individuals who were not immunized in time became a high risk group. As a result, it might not be possible to eradicate the disease in one country without similar efforts in the neighbouring countries of the region. It was therefore of paramount importance that UNICEF support regional cooperation in the effort to eradicate polio. Another question which must be addressed was whether high immunization coverage with oral polio vaccine alone could stamp out the disease, especially in countries with tropical climates. In order to shed light on that issue, a controlled vaccine efficacy study had been initiated in Oman in cooperation with WHO.

(Mr. Suleiman, Oman)

64. In August 1990, Oman had added hepatitis-B vaccination to its expanded programme on immunization (EPI). However, the cost of the vaccine had increased recently. He believed that if UNICEF could assist countries in the first few years of integrating the vaccine into their EPI, the increased demand would bring the cost down.

65. In the developing world, accidents were an increasing cause of morbidity and mortality, as well as disability among children. The very lives which were saved and nurtured by UNICEF programmes were often subsequently lost or blighted by accidents and injuries. Existing educational, rehabilitation and care facilities for the handicapped were hopelessly inadequate. Expanding those facilities required a change in attitudes, which could be brought about by nationwide community-based efforts. UNICEF had an important role to play in helping countries to promote greater awareness of the needs of the disabled for a range of normal life activities.

66. Ms. Palme (Sweden), Chairman, resumed the Chair.

67. Mrs. MUÑOZ de GAVIRIA (Observer for Colombia) said that, although 1990 had been an historic year for children, the first few months of 1991 had been marked by the Gulf war, and children had been the first to suffer its tragic consequences. Fortunately, the United Nations, primarily UNICEF, and Governments and non-governmental organizations were carrying out humanitarian relief efforts to alleviate the situation.

68. Her Government had defined a new model of development centred on the human person and based on the understanding that without economic development there could be no social development, and vice versa. Priority was being given to strategies to improve conditions for the 48 per cent of the population who lived in poverty, especially children, young people and women.

69. An increasing number of measures were being taken on behalf of children in Colombia. The Convention on the Rights of the Child had become part of Colombian law. The National Constituent Assembly, which was drafting the new Constitution, had agreed to include a chapter specifically guaranteeing the rights of the child and the family and regulating the obligations of parents and society. At the end of May 1991, the Colombian Council on Economic and Social Policy would submit to the President a plan of action for children, outlining specific strategies for meeting the needs of children and young people.

70. Although Colombia had succeeded in greatly expanding primary education, only 7 per cent of children aged under 7 were able to receive preschool education and only 40 per cent of those between the ages of 12 and 17 had access to secondary education. The educational expansion plan for 1990-1994 aimed to enrol a further 630,000 children aged six to seven in preschool education or kindergarten and to create 600,000 new places in secondary education.

(Mrs. Muñoz de Gaviria, Observer, Colombia)

71. In 1990, her country had managed to immunize 80 per cent of children aged under 1 against several communicable diseases. In May and July 1991, 3.5 million children under 5 years of age and 650,000 pregnant women or women of child-bearing age would be immunized against tetanus. Pregnant women would be immunized in the context of prenatal programmes designed to extend maternal and child health care to the earliest stages of pregnancy.

72. Colombia had made great strides in expanding oral rehydration therapy. That programme, combined with other efforts in the areas of sanitation, nutrition and health infrastructures, constituted a strategy for cholera prevention and control. She supported the draft resolution on that subject proposed by Peru.

73. With regard to food and nutrition, expanded food programmes and subsidies would benefit approximately 2.9 million children and 350,000 mothers. To complement those efforts, drinking water supply and monitoring programmes were being carried out.

74. Colombia was aware of the problem of children in especially difficult circumstances and was implementing rehabilitation programmes for young people who were at risk of becoming delinquent or were in situations of social risk, such as street children, working children or victims of child abuse.

75. With regard to the advancement of women, her Government was promoting policies and programmes in the areas of income generation and employment, legal protection and assistance, education and training, and health and organization. Special emphasis was placed on women heads of household, teenage girls and pregnant women.

76. Lastly, she wished to underscore the comments made by the President of Colombia at the World Summit concerning her country's struggle against drugs. Colombians of all social sectors had paid an extremely high price for that struggle. The country had committed resources beyond its means to the detriment of its development and social investment programmes. For that reason, she felt justified in asking for support from multilateral and bilateral cooperation agencies.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

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1991 regular session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 8th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 23 April 1991, at 6.15 p.m.

Chairman: Ms. PALME (Sweden)

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General debate (continued)

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(Mr. Jerkic, Observer, Yugoslavia)

respect for human rights. He appreciated the readiness of UNICEF to consider and help solve the problems of children in Central and Eastern Europe during their countries' transition to a market economy. In addition to the engagement by UNICEF, the regular programmes of assistance to developing countries should be maintained as the primary instrument in promoting the goals and strategies endorsed by the World Summit for Children.

5. Mr. MAHMOUD (Observer for Lebanon) said that the World Summit for Children, held at United Nations Headquarters on 30 September 1990, had been a unique event, having brought together 70 Heads of State or Government to discuss issues relating solely to children. Over the preceding year children throughout the world, whether in their homes or displaced, had continued to be exposed to natural disasters and disasters caused by man. Poverty, malnutrition, ignorance, disease, armed conflicts and natural disasters continued to take their toll of children's lives and hinder development. The efforts of Governments the dedication of UNICEF and the activities of non-governmental organizations were essential in limiting the impact of those brutal realities.

6. In his report entitled "Promises to keep", the Executive Director described the positive achievements in the service of children in developing countries, whose enormous problems required a vigorous international response. In that connection he noted that over the previous 15 years the Lebanese child had been an example of the suffering of children caused by war and its aftermath: displacement and loss of family, home, security and stability, in addition to the death of siblings and relatives, and, indeed, the total destruction of whole neighbourhoods and their population, leading children down the path of despair rather than to the schoolroom and a settled social life. The extreme poverty of the whole population, particularly over the past two years, had further lowered the standard of living and the capacity to provide necessary health services.

7. With the positive developments in the political and security domain, Lebanon was determined to confront its tragic conditions, with the aim of resuming its constructive role in the region and securing a peaceful and prosperous future for all its peoples, especially children. The tremendous challenges facing Lebanon in the near future necessitated the assistance of the international community in order to speed up the process of recovery. In that connection, UNICEF's activities in Lebanon over the previous 15 years, including the immunization campaign during the armed conflict, which, under the slogan of "United to protect the children", had been a unifying initiative in a shattered country, had been invaluable. During those difficult years UNICEF had been one of the few organizations which had stayed in Beirut, and it had played an important role in coordinating relief activities on behalf of United Nations agencies. Nevertheless, much more remained to be done - and urgently - since, as the Chairman had so rightly said, "the child could not wait".

8. Mrs. ADHAMLICH BENWANI (Observer for Morocco) said that her delegation had read with interest the report on UNICEF's programme strategies for the attainment of the objectives established in the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children (E/ICEF/1991/12). The timetable for 1991 and 1992 for the implementation of those objectives encompassed various priority questions, including the critical situation of children in Africa.

9. It should be recognized that over the past 30 years traditional societies had been fundamentally transformed, with meteoric demographic growth and rapid and unrestrained urbanization, destroying the old balances between the rural and urban worlds, and, at the same time, endangering the fragile balance of the environment. The result had been an international and national economic order which was frequently injust, a deterioration in the terms of trade and a worsening of inequality.

10. Many third world children, particularly in Africa, lived in unstable societies, often in the throes of disintegration, in unstructured family environments, and, above all, in unending poverty with no hope of improvement. In Africa more than 50 per cent of the population was under 15 years of age and, over the past three decades, the population had more than doubled. New forms of wretchedness and child exploitation were springing up: street children, and children who were sold or abandoned, or who were drug addicts or refugees, and whose numbers continued to grow as their countries sank into extreme poverty. To those should be added the children who were victims of hunger and AIDS. For all those reasons it was essential for the international community to maintain and strengthen its solidarity to assist in the execution of UNICEF programmes for the survival of the child and the goals established in the Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children.

11. There was no doubt that UNICEF, in cooperation with other international agencies such as WHO, UNESCO, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNDP, UNFPA and the non-governmental organizations working in the field, would be able to set up definitively in developing countries structures to provide education, reduce the birth rate, lower infant and maternal mortality rates and promote child spacing. Needless to say, education was the essential factor for guaranteeing a better future for generations to come. It was the key to development and an essential solution to many of the grave problems affecting third world countries. One could not speak of development without including education for girls in order to promote their participation as future women in the development process. That was one of the tasks that UNICEF had included in its programmes for the region of the Middle East and North Africa and which Morocco had always supported.

12. One could not forget either the serious consequences which the tragic Gulf war had had for the already vulnerable political situation and social and economic progress of developing countries, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa. In its report, UNICEF indicated that poverty would increase considerably in that region and that, except for the petroleum-producing

(Mrs. Adhamlich Benwani, Observer, Morocco)

countries, the other States would experience setbacks in their development and run the risk of losing the advantages gained from the progress made in the area of child protection in recent years. In spite of all that, one must continue to hope that the countries of the region would be able to meet the challenges, maintaining and strengthening the programmes set up with UNICEF, especially those designed to relieve the suffering of the Palestinian children in the occupied territories.

13. Mrs. PADRON (Observer for Venezuela) said that her country had already convened a National Conference on the Rights of the Child, to be held from 27 to 29 August 1991. A presidential decree had set up a committee composed of eight ministers responsible for programmes related to the welfare of children, presidents of relevant autonomous institutes, members of various non-governmental organizations and so forth. The basic objective of the Conference would be to promote a sharing of responsibility by the public sector and the non-governmental sector with regard to the situation of children in Venezuela. The Conference was to evaluate the main programmes for children being developed by the two sectors and propose a national plan of action to reach the goals set for the year 2000 under the plan adopted at the World Conference for Children was to be proposed.

14. In that way, several of the recommendations set forth in paragraph 34 of the Plan of Action would be implemented since the Conference was designed to evaluate, monitor and adjust the measures being taken at the national level with regard to the survival, protection and development of children. Since the commission organizing the Conference was a mechanism for promoting communication and cooperation between the public sector and non-governmental organizations concerning children, it was possible to lay the foundation for the World Alliance for Children, which the Executive Director referred to in his report (E/ICEF/1991/2 (Part I)). In that connection, plans had been made to set up preparatory committees for regional conferences in order to implement in each of the federal divisions programmes for children at the federal and state level.

15. To ensure the success of the Conference, her country required the technical support of the academic sector and the considerable technical and financial assistance of UNICEF, approved through the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. Nevertheless, those monitoring and evaluation measures would not serve any purpose if at the same time programmes with far-reaching social impact were not carried out, such as those which the Government of Venezuela had been implementing since the beginning of 1989 and which were part of a social policy to protect the poor within the framework of the macroeconomic adjustment required by the situation in the country.

16. The economic imbalances that had been experienced by other Latin American countries since the 1960s had only come about in Venezuela 20 years later because it was a petroleum producing and exporting country. Aware of the fact that corrective measures would lead to a further deterioration of living

(Mrs. Padron, Observer, Venezuela)

standards, the Government had put into effect in February 1989 a social policy based on mechanisms designed to protect the poorest sectors of the population in a compensatory effort to meet their priority needs. With regard to objectives, the strategy's point of reference was the goal of "adjustment with a human face", which UNICEF had promoted since the beginning of the 1980s.

17. For 1991, about 85 per cent of the approximate $1 billion allocated for programmes for the poor were to be used for programmes for children in three priority sectors: nutrition, maternal-and-child health and pre-school and basic education. The system of food subsidies distributed through the pre-school and basic education network, which was a basic part of those programmes, would benefit 2.5 million children by the end of 1991, in other words, more than 60 per cent of the pupils enrolled at those levels. Indirectly, the system had served to encourage enrolment and reduce school drop-out rates. By broadening the maternal and child health services, her Government hoped to reach in 1991 100 per cent of the target population, a group of 2 million children and 600,000 mothers in the poor sectors of the population. The ultimate objective of the programme was to improve nutritional levels and reduce infant and maternal morbidity and mortality rates.

18. The two programmes referred to were only part of the measures taken to promote the survival, protection and development of children. Nevertheless, since they represented a sizeable social investment, which, by the end of 1991, would reach approximately 4.5 million children - more than 50 per cent of the population under the age of 14 - they demonstrated the priority given to that field. The cooperation of international agencies such as the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, UNESCO and, particularly, UNICEF, had been instrumental in ensuring the effective implementation of those programmes. Her Government was grateful for the receptive manner with which UNICEF had considered its requests and commended the financing provided by mechanisms such as the Special Adjustment Facility for Latin America and the Caribbean (SAFLAC), which had helped Venezuela cope with an emergency social situation and budgetary constraints and also reduce the social cost of the short-term adjustment policy.

19. The Fund had provided support for the agreement between Colombia and Venezuela on the protection of children, the only such agreement between countries with migrant populations. In order to maintain that response capacity, UNICEF must be provided in the next few years with the resources necessary for its proper functioning. In that regard, Venezuela viewed with concern any budgetary restriction that might affect the programmes proposed by the Executive Director. Lastly, she expressed her country's support for the draft resolution on cholera sponsored by Peru.

20. Mr. RADULIAN (Observer for Romania), speaking as Chairman of the Romanian National Committee for UNICEF, expressed gratitude for the emergency assistance provided in the past year to Romania in order to improve the

(Mr. Radulian, Observer, Romania)

situation of children that had been inherited from the totalitarian regime. In January 1991, the UNICEF international office in Bucharest had begun operations and the National Committee hoped to maintain excellent relations of cooperation with it.

21. Romania, like the other countries of Eastern Europe, was going through a period of transition towards a market economy that required great economic and social sacrifices. Those difficulties were compounded by the rise in prices and a scarcity of goods, particularly food products and medicine. International solidarity and the support of UNICEF constituted not only the sole means of overcoming the difficulties, but also the most useful investment for the future. The results achieved during the year through the activities of the Romanian National Committee, such as the sale of 500,000 greeting cards and the social mobilization of the people, gave rise to the hope that the temporary assistance received might increase tenfold in coming years for the benefit of children in other parts of the world.

22. Romania had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Committee, in collaboration with the human rights commissions of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, and with the participation of lawyers and other experts, had considered ways of incorporating its provisions into national legislation. Work on a new Constitution had already begun, and a proposal had been submitted to Parliament to include in it provisions relating to protection of the mother, the child and the family.

23. In January 1991, the Romanian National Committee for UNICEF had become an independent, representative and pluralistic non-governmental organization. In a short space of time, it had managed to attract individuals, entities and groups concerned with improving children's health, nutrition, development and education. In that spirit, the Committee had launched a campaign on the theme of a "first call for children", and was preparing a number of activities to mobilize public support for UNICEF and its objectives. Those activities included the proclamation of June as the "Month of the Child", with childhood being designated as "the springtime of life", and the holding during that month of a gala benefit on the theme of "The world belongs to children" and a colloquium to discuss the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Consideration was also being given to setting up a children's parliament, where children's problems would be discussed and their concerns aired so as to help guide the future action of parents and teachers.

24. The Committee, which in September 1990 had drafted the "Report on the situation of children in Romania" in collaboration with the International Child Development Centre at Florence, Italy, was planning to conduct two other studies, one on families in time of social and economic transition, and the other on children in the urban environment. Moreover, the Committee was also taking part, in collaboration with the Institute for the Quality of Life and the two government ministries concerned, in a broad study entitled "Social and educational strategies for detecting, preventing and controlling vagrancy and juvenile delinquency".

25. Mrs. KABA-CAMARA (Observer for Côte d'Ivoire) said that, despite the existing unfavourable economic conditions which had banished all hope that international resources would be mobilized for the development of the poor countries, the fact that, in 1990, children had been the international community's central concern was a positive sign. The entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the adoption of the World Declaration and Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s were evidence of a political will to give special attention to children. However, most countries of sub-Saharan Africa lacked the resources needed to translate that will into concrete action.

26. After achieving its independence, Côte d'Ivoire had experienced a period of relative economic prosperity which had been reflected in substantial social progress, particularly in the educational field. However, the drop in the price of exports and the debt burden had hampered social development and had plunged the country into an unprecedented economic crisis. Like many African countries, Côte d'Ivoire required external support for its efforts to revive the economy.

27. In the health field, regrettably, AIDS and malaria continued to claim many victims, raising bleak prospects for Africa, and the Executive Board should turn its attention to them. All efforts should focus on reducing extreme poverty by radically increasing bilateral and multilateral development assistance to Africa in order to pave the way for social progress which would bring with it greater well-being for women and children. In that connection, UNICEF had allocated 37 per cent of its resources to Africa and had increased the number of its field offices.

28. Although the increase in resources for headquarters should not be at the expense of field activities, the Executive Board should nonetheless bear in mind that in order to achieve satisfactory results in the field, a proper balance must be struck between programme expansion and the needs of the central administration.

29. Mr. TRINH XUAN LANG (Observer for Viet Nam) said that his delegation was strongly convinced that all the positive developments of recent years relating to the commitment to child survival and development were the result of an impressive movement for children, namely, UNICEF. UNICEF emergency relief operations had been highly effective in catalysing and supporting national efforts, particularly when most developing countries were confronted with severe socio-economic difficulties and the challenges of adjustment and development. In many countries, time and field experience had illustrated the value of the approaches, measures and techniques advocated by UNICEF.

30. The world was currently facing many issues, such as the environment, population, external debt, AIDS, poverty and development, which had a great impact on the development process of countries and, accordingly, on the quality of life and growth of children. His delegation welcomed UNICEF's

(Mr. Trinh Xuan Lang, Observer, Viet Nam)

initiatives and its close collaboration with other specialized agencies in addressing children's issues within the broader context of global problems; he especially appreciated its innovative approach in incorporating environmental components into child survival and development programmes.

31. Viet Nam had been one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and it had been busy since then preparing supplementary legislation. In spite of numerous difficulties, his country firmly upheld the important principle of giving priority to children's concerns, survival and full development. Viet Nam was facing the same problems as most other low-income developing countries, and its efforts had been hampered by limited financial resources. Accordingly, his Government greatly appreciated UNICEF assistance programmes. UNICEF had channelled international cooperation and assistance to the people and Government of Viet Nam, and had been a valuable source of encouragement and support to them.

32. Mr. KORUTURK (Observer for Turkey), while expressing satisfaction at the progress reflected in the report of the Executive Director (E/ICEF/1991/2 (Parts I and II)), said that he shared the latter's concern at the problems that still remained and that must be overcome, bearing in mind the principle of a "first call for children" set forth in the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s. At the same time, he welcomed the success of the world-wide universal child immunization campaign and noted that maintaining and enhancing its results should be the fundamental goal of the UNICEF cooperation programme. In Turkey, the success of the immunization campaign begun in 1985 was due to both the Government's efforts and the cooperation and support of UNICEF. However, universal child immunization was a goal which still required substantial efforts.

33. Children's health and well-being depended in large measure on the health and well-being of their mothers, who played a central role in the implementation of UNICEF programmes. Accordingly, priority should be given to programmes for mothers and pregnant women. In that connection, Turkey appreciated the importance which UNICEF attached to activities for the advancement of women, and actively supported all measures designed to achieve the goal of a 50 per cent reduction in the maternal mortality rate.

34. Mr. AUGUSTE (Observer for Haiti) said that the objectives established by the World Summit for Children were of extreme urgency, and would remain valid so long as the physical, intellectual, social and spiritual development of children remained wanting. Reducing infant mortality, maternal mortality, chronic malnutrition and illiteracy rates and ensuring universal access to drinking water, sanitation and basic education, as advocated by the World Conference on Education for All, held at Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990, were the fundamental tasks of a humane civilization; peoples, governments, specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations should devote themselves to those tasks, as UNICEF was already doing in a very special way.

(Mr. Auguste, Observer, Haiti)

35. UNICEF should maintain its approach which consisted of viewing issues as interrelated, since close and harmonious coordination between UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO, the World Bank, UNDP and others would facilitate its task and expedite the solution of problems which were of concern to all. It was important to show clearly what proportion of programme resources was allocated to experts participating in project execution, and to research and studies commissioned outside the country concerned, so it could be seen how much went to social investment and how much went to collateral services. In that regard, it was important not to get carried away when adopting decisions on research and documentation since usually there were already monographs which merely required updating.

36. It was also important to ensure that the functions and obligations which UNICEF assumed were not disproportionate to its resources, which might not remain at the current level, and to consider the possibility of using contributions from other sources. Upon retiring, international staff could supervise non-governmental organizations which met certain requirements; their proven expertise could be especially beneficial to their countries of origin. Those suggestions did not detract from the importance of the work which UNICEF was carrying out around the world.

37. Because of its integrated approach, the Executive Board's activity had taken various directions and it had even sought solutions to the effects of structural adjustment on social programmes, but it must not stray from the fundamental and primary functions of UNICEF nor duplicate the efforts of other organizations in those areas. That integrated approach should be supplemented by similar strategies aimed at achieving a political commitment at the national and international level; at developing concrete plans of action based on the fundamental goals set for the year 2000; at assigning appropriate budget resources to achieve those goals; at mobilizing women and children to that end; and at achieving sustained and durable international cooperation on programmes related to health, education, poverty reduction, the fight against environmental degradation, etc. There was a human dimension to the philosophy of the Executive Board, which tended not to limit itself to considerations of economic growth but to attach importance above all to social indicators.

38. Two aspects should be emphasized in defining the principles that governed UNICEF activities, namely, the democratic dimension and the urgent need to carry out concrete plans of action at the national and the international level. Haiti's present Government was determined to tackle the principal social problems and had mobilized the community to that end. The time had come to reactivate the UNICEF programme to facilitate attainment of the minimum level of well-being without which democracy could be no more than a deceit.

39. Mr. ERDENECHULUUN (Observer for Mongolia), having given a brief account of the main international activities carried out in 1990 in favour of children, said that he agreed with those speakers who had emphasized the importance of maintaining the momentum and promoting practical action at the national and international level. His delegation supported the measures proposed by UNICEF in the Programme of Action for Achieving the Goals for Children and Development in the 1990s (E/ICEF/1991/12).

40. The vaccine research initiative and the new nutrition strategy approved by the Executive Board at its previous session deserved full support since they were valuable guidelines for the development of appropriate national policies and strategies. His delegation noted with gratitude that UNICEF was undertaking to carry out studies and organize training programmes and seminars whose final results had practical importance for developing countries. It would be good for such studies to be distributed as widely and as quickly as possible among those countries.

41. After pointing out that Mongolia had been among the first countries to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child and describing some of its important achievements in the field of health and education, he said that measures aimed at increasing children's quality of life were an integral part of the renewal policy followed by the new multiparty Government. Those measures included the comprehensive maternal and child welfare plan up to the year 2000 and the new pensions act, as well as new measures for improving the plight of vulnerable groups, and were being implemented despite the great difficulties the country was experiencing in its efforts to achieve economic development and move to a market economy. None the less, everything possible was being done to increase international cooperation and mobilize other financial and material resources. In that regard, he thanked UNICEF for the substantial increase in assistance to Mongolia envisaged in the country programme for the period 1991-1995. A UNICEF office would shortly be established in Mongolia and would contribute to the continued strengthening of their cooperation.

42. Mr. BRANCO (Sao Tome and Principe) noted that his country had achieved universal child immunization in 1990, in part thanks to UNICEF's support. He referred to the process of democratization in Sao Tome and Principe, as a result of which the population looked to the future with renewed confidence and with the hope that it could count on the solidarity of the international community.

43. While his delegation believed that UNICEF could overcome the obstacles that would certainly be encountered in pursuing its goals, it did not underestimate the nature of the problems nor the need to introduce the necessary adjustments in UNICEF's structure and modus operandi. The resources available should be directed as much as possible to operational activities in the field, especially in Africa, and should be concentrated at the national level on those programmes that constituted clearly established priorities. He called the attention of Board members to the additional funding needs of his country's programme.

44. Mr. CORREIA (Observer for Angola), after briefly outlining the measures taken by the Government of Angola since independence for the benefit of women and children, emphasized the seriousness of the plight of those groups, especially in the zones most affected by drought and armed conflict. With respect to the country programme (E/ICEF/1991/P/L.3), he said that the immediate causes of the high infant mortality rate were neonatal tetanus, diarrhoeal diseases and malaria.

45. He explained the causes of the destruction of the country's economic and social infrastructure and the measures taken by the Government to find a peaceful solution to the armed conflict, and emphasized the importance of the resolution on the economic rehabilitation of Angola adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session.

46. With respect to cooperation with UNICEF, his delegation would be presenting a new plan of action for the next five years that could be adapted to the new reality of prospects for peace in the country and in southern Africa. He thanked the international community for the humanitarian aid given to Angola, urged the Executive Director to continue his efforts to raise the necessary resources to save the thousands of Angolans who were at risk, and expressed satisfaction that Africa was one of UNICEF's priorities.

47. Mr. MacDONALD (Observer for Australia) recalled that on 26 September 1924, the League of Nations had adopted a Declaration of the Rights of the Child which had confirmed its belief that all children, regardless of their situation, had the right to the means of their material and spiritual development. In September 1990, the international community had adopted a similar but more comprehensive declaration on the survival, protection and development of children in the 1990s, and had drawn up a Plan of Action for implementing it. Although there was still a lag between the commitment to the welfare of children and the practical action taken to achieve it, there was no doubt that UNICEF could be justly proud of the progress it had made and continued to make towards bettering the lot of children. The existence of children in need and poverty was not a testament to UNICEF's failure, but more an indictment of humanity's folly.

48. With the resources made available to it, UNICEF had made immense inroads into alleviating the plight of children, and his delegation fully supported the programmes that had emerged. UNICEF's central focus on basic child health programmes should remain, along with related programmes on water, sanitation and nutrition; linked to such programmes as universal child immunization, attention to primary health care infrastructure was necessary to ensure the sustainability of the immunization programme.

49. His delegation welcomed the initiative adopted at the previous session on acute respiratory infection and looked forward to the 1992 interim paper on its progress. It also applauded the attention to breast-feeding programmes and endorsed the initiatives in that area. Another important general programme aspect was the training of birth attendants. Too few countries in

(Mr. MacDonald, Observer, Australia)

the Asian region gave due emphasis to that appropriate technology, preferring instead to focus on capital-intensive and high-technology doctor training.

50. While Australia recognized the continuing need for UNICEF services in Africa, it should not be forgotten that the Asian region still held the majority of the world's poor children. In that regard, Australia was pleased to see a programme paper seeking the Board's approval for additional funds for Papua New Guinea. His delegation also recognized the needs of children in Eastern Europe but would not want to see the diversion of scarce resources intended for children in developing countries. It therefore emphasized the short-term nature of such assistance.

51. At a time of very restricted aid budgets, it was both unrealistic and impractical to expect growth rates in the UNICEF budget in the 1990s to be maintained at anything like the 1990 rate. On the issue of staff resources, his delegation could only assume that the secretariat's request for such high numbers of additional and upgraded staff was based on the expectation of having its bid reduced.

52. Lastly, he pointed out that UNICEF Australia played a vital and noble role in reminding all Australians of UNICEF's central mandate, namely, the welfare of the world's needy children.

The meeting rose at 8.25 p.m.